Someone once told me that motorcyclists have 2 times as many fatalities as bicyclists and 10 times as many as car drivers. Motorbikes are dangerous but they probably aren’t that lethal. Another published statistic ‘proves’ you are 56 times more likely to be killed when walking than when riding in a car...on a per mile traveled basis. All popular statistics are somewhat biased by social bigotry. Anti-motorcycle: prejudices thrive because bikes are ‘non conforming’ vehicles. What makes them seem exceptionally risky is...partly...that they are potentially disruptive to the order of our transportation system. Superior nimbleness causes bikes to be subconsciously seen as mildly threatening and seductive. Our road network is optimized for cars and light trucks so this bias is well rooted and insidious.

Motorcycling may statistically chart as being riskier because more riders are young, male, and risk (speed/performance) oriented...or because social drinking may more often be combined with riding than with overall driving activities. Riders sometimes become cynical, alienated or estranged after they’ve accepted the apparently increased risks of riding in return for it’s greater efficiency, enjoyment and fun.

There are lot’s of people in cars who do not understand this. Some just...hate...it. (cops and judges, too.) Riders are culturally and socially marginalized whenever they decide to motorcycle for transportation.

Motorcyclists must be more self-confident about their ability (and their luck) than all others on our roads. Riders are the most hyper-abled users of our transportation infrastructure...in the same way that athletes surpass general fitness norms. If a rider is killed by some car running a red light, the driver will get a $400 fine...and the available charge of vehicular manslaughter will probably not be applied. After all, everyone drives a car, including the judge. Almost everyone appreciates and accepts bikes as ‘toys’...so that’s how they are understood. This limited awareness is enormously harmful to all transportation-motorcycling riders.

Choosing riding is one of the most serious decisions anyone can make. The consequences of a typical bike accident are far less pre-determined than those of an average car accident. A motorcycle accident may produce no injuries...or death...depending on the specific crash kinesthetic and what (if anything) a fallen rider bumps into. We ride paranoid, maintain good technical riding skills and do not allow daily experiences to make us over-confident. These disciplines distinguish us from everyone else on the road and help explain some of the public’s biases. Sometimes biases are...believe it or not...jealousy-generated.

The advantages of transportation motorcycling are easy to list: More parking, less road congestion, less energy consumption, less infrastructure wear, shorter travel times, more healthy and alert people, etc... Far too few persons view motorcycles as offering practical solutions to transportation, social and environmental problems. Pervasive mechanisms of social bigotry insure that many of motorcycling’s risks will be widely misunderstood for some time. But accommodating both less-abled and hyper-abled road users improves conditions for everyone. Much has already been done for the former. (Ask any traffic engineer or planner...) Now we must begin to recognize the valuable contributions of the latter. U.S. Transportation-motorcycling riders.

Motorcycling does not exist in a simple...paper-covers-rock-breaks-scissors world. Every SUV does not crush every small car which does not crush every motorcycle which does not crush every pedestrian. How we drive, ride and walk makes a huge difference in all of our individual survival chances. Riding for transportation means placing one less car on the road...or in a parking space. Safely splitting a lane or filtering up to a light can reduce everyone’s travel times. Other motorcyle-dense cultures already view riders in more socially positive ways. Riding here is not yet seen as both recreation and a powerful social good. This change will happen if we believe it can. Our cause is just now beginning. To borrow THE phrase: ‘we shall overcome’.

There’s no substitute for hard statistics. Current information about riding’s risks facilitates...and is affected by...cultural biases. Motorcycle commuting may be somewhat more risky than taking a car or riding a bus. On the other hand, it may not actually be as awful as is widely believed. We don’t yet know all of the answers or even all of the right questions. Advances in computers, software and other technologies should now permit the generation of truer statistics to more clearly and accurately gauge the risks of motorcycle commuting. If you are a statistician, actuary, data miner, quant, nerd or wonk and are looking for a new hobby, you can help. Vast existing databases are awaiting your examination. We’ll distribute your new metrics. Over the long term everyone may begin to understand and appreciate the benefits of having more motorcyclists sharing our roads. It would be sooo great.
You hear the big, whining mud
When mom and dad see you, they look straight through you. Some of their
ing with the rattle of huge diesel engines.

They pause in school zones, mom and dad dropping off Justin and Heather.
scared at all.

The drivers eat McMuffins and chat on cell-phones, not
back windows are tinted dark. You can
You ride anyway.

On your ride, young guys in baseball hats, one cheek bulging smokelessly,
with tan leather and a tan top. CD player. Gorgeous. Enjoy it, she says.
re a submarine captain listening for the depth
charge that cracks the hull, lets black freezing water rush in.

You ride anyway.

When there
faster. The wide, sneering grills of their Rams and Expeditions fill your mirrors.

When you get to work, you park your bike under cover and peel off your rain-
You ride anyway.

Chicks.

"You can see all that in their eyes. Oh. Again today your rainsuit has leaked a
dry by quitting time. They never have.

People at work do not mention your commuting by bike. They know that if
they ever start to discuss it with you, they’ll blunt out how crazy they think
You are. You ride in the RAIN and the DARK, they’d say; What do you do that?

You can see all that in their eyes. Oh. A gain today your rainsuit has leaked a
dark stain onto the crotch of your jeans. Your coworkers stare, embarrassed for
You. No one speaks.

You ride anyway.

The wide radial tires your motorcycle requires cost ten thousand dollars plus
mount-and-balance and last four days. You’re either on slick new rubber,
warned by your shop to take it easy, or you’re thinking about what tires to buy
next.

You spend more on tires than rent, more than you do on
going out or eating out, more than you ever could’ve imagined. Thank God
your long-suffering sweetheart, who got a supermarket bouquet on Valentine’s,
hasn’t seen your check register.

You ride anyway.

You’re obsessive about rainy-weather chain lubrication. You know you are. No
one else on the planet cares about it, and you’re obsessed. You’d like to think
you have your little problem under control, but you don’t. It hasn’t impacted
your work life or relationship, but it could... You sense an intervention lies
ahead. Tough-love for the chain-lube freak.

You ride anyway.

You get a cold a year. It’s not a terrible cold, no worse than enduring a prison
Camp in Viet Nam or manning an oar in a Roman slave galley. Your cold typi-
cally lasts eight or nine days, during which time you forget why you ever
thought life was worth living.

You ride anyway.

You take your ex-girlfriend to the airport in her car. She’s flying to Italy. She’ll
be gone a month. She promises to buy you an Italian motorcycle magazine in
Florence. She leaves you her wine-colored Mazda Miata, the Special Edition
with tan leather and a tan top. CD player. Gorgeous. Enjoy it, she says.

She fills the tank for you, to thank you for dropping her off at UCLA Departures
and picking her up next month. Sweet woman. Nice car. Rains all week.

You ride anyway.

You sit at a light next to a dark-eyed woman in a print dress in an old Ford sta-
wagon. She

"— if the freeway were empty.

We don’t have any marble to sculpt, so here’s a list of our most...

Rider pin, sticker T-shirt
propaganda@ridetowork.org

You ride anyway.

Send Support
Rider To Work, Inc.
Box 1072
Proctor, MN
55810-0072
218 722 9806

Receipts Supporter... as above + button
$55

$125 Advocate... as above + button + bandanna
$175

$300 Contributor... as above + button + bandanna + mug
$150

$600 Serious Contributor... as above + button + bandanna + mug + notecube + wall clock
$125

$1000 True Believer... as above + button + bandanna + mug + notecube + wall clock + sweatshirt
$150

$2000 Ridin’ Fool... as above + button + bandanna + mug + notecube + wall clock + sweatshirt + an un-
be-lievably sense of well being
$1000

Thanks to Jason Emmert of Alpha Mailing Services (704 335 9907) for providing mailing services.

Joseph P. Joseph
Medfield, MA
Riding Fool

Patrick Riley MD
Washington, NC
Believer

Michael Hanson
Mounds View, MN
Believer

Cheryl & Paul Fleckenstein
Barham, MN
Believer

David Reichert
Rochester, MN
Contributor

Robert Covey
San Pedro, CA
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Watkinsville, GA
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Henry Winkler
Bethesda, MD
Contributor

Rex Walker Jr.
Tampa, FL
Contributor

Russell Erbe
Ravena, OH
Contributor

John Elod
Tigard, OR
Advocate

Rider Writer
written for the Daily Rider by
Maynard Hershon

And there are good days. You occasionally think, what the hell, where
is this all going? You
re thinking about what tires to buy

re either on slick new rubber,

You are beyond fearful. You

re a genuinely sick person. They would be correct.

You ride anyway.

re a biker

re a genuine

Hi, folks,

It’s nice to see you undertaking this project! I have a couple of questions about statements in your newsletter (Issue No.1).

I was wondering about the basis for your statement that “higher statistical accident rates for riders are due to a greater incidence of excessive speed or impairment (DUI) among motorcyclists.” I am an MSF instructor and the curriculum we use states that the incidence of impairment (DUI) among motorcyclists is not higher than among other motorists, just the consequences are. If you rely upon some authority in saying motorcyclists are impaired or DUI more than other motorists, I would be very interested in knowing about it.

Second, the Hurt study (which analyzed the causes of tens of thousands of motorcycle accidents, and remains the best information we have about why motorcyclists are accident-involved) indicates that the major causes of motorcycle accidents is the motorcycle not being seen by other motorists (due in part to a lack of conspicuity on the part of the motorcyclist), followed by factors such as the motorcyclist’s inability to swerve or use the brakes properly. I haven’t seen excessive speed and DUI identified as causes of higher accident rates for motorcyclists. Can you tell me why the authority for saying this?

Finally, do motorcyclists actually have more accidents than other motorists? Again, the MSF curriculum teaches that motorcyclists do not, but that the consequences of accidents for motorcyclists are more severe. Once again, I would appreciate knowing what you rely on in saying that they do.

I hope my requests aren’t too burdensome... I figure it’s important that we motorcyclists are put-ting accurate information out there, me included. So thanks for responding.

Happy trails,
Susan Garner Russell (via email)

Hi Susan,

Thank you for your message and questions. The claims and statements were not taken from empirical or statistical sources like the Hurt report. The Daily Rider flyer was written to encourage participation in Ride To Work day. The source material for most of the content was a variety of articles and clippings published over the last few years. This pro-motorcycle editorial material was combined and used without paying very much attention to annotation or documentation because the purpose of the flyer was to advocate riding to work. It is possible that some material was included which cannot be deductively supported. The question at the center of this concern is: Is leisure, social, and sport riding activities are removed from the motorcycle population so that only a small daily commuting rider group remains... then what kind of accident indices adhere to this commuting group, and how do these indices compare to the exclusively automobile using commuting population... and how do they compare to the overall private vehicle population? I would like to be able to statistically verify that motorcycle commuting is statistically safer than the risks for all leisure/social/sport/general motorcycle riding activities. At this point the logic for arriving at that conclusion is inductively based, but with recent data mining capabilities there is a chance that additional kinds of statistically based evidence could be produced. One person with useful technical skills for doing this volunteered to work toward this end, but I do not know if he will produce anything. This kind of information would be useful for both motorcycle and for the Ride To Work day program. If you know someone who might be interested in helping us develop this data, please contact them. Risk is sort of a red herring for motorcycling. On a per mile basis, walking is something like 56 times more likely to involve an individual in an accident which results in death than riding in or driving an automobile. Similarly, being in a car is many times more dangerous than being in an airplane. Motorcycling falls somewhere along that continuum... possibly even past the risks of walking (on a per mile traveled basis). But the greater social benefits of walking, bicycling, skating, skateboarding, and motorcycling for transportation all outweigh their higher risk factors (compared to using private automobiles). Despite popular suburbanization, capsulized modern life styles, we are socialized entities. Technologies which increase our socialization and re-infuse positive social behaviors might sometimes be more directly risky, but they may also provide overall benefits that outweigh individual risks.

Let me know if you have questions or if I can be of other assistance.

Andy

Hi Andy,

I got your newsletter re: rider rights, and will be sending a check in support. I am, however, concerned that you may ask for so much (that legists would read this document and feel like what you are pursuing is too radical. I don’t know what the history of other groups pursuing things like this is, but asking for lane splitting privileges in the first place as improved road and employers providing the “safe, secure parking” areas may have everybody from police groups to Chambers of Commerce up in arms saying that there is nothing to give an inch for fear of the proverbial mile.

Dave Lurvey

Hi Dave,

Thanks for your message and support of Ride to Work Day. I understand your points about how we are asking for a lot, but my approach involves two things: First, make Ride To Work day as pop-ular and successful as possible (second) ask for everything absolutely everything... that would help motorcycling become more popular as a form of utility transportation, (the fun aspect of riding motorcycles takes care of itself). The only way is to ask for everything. What is ‘realistic’ or ‘diplomatic’ or ‘possible’ is not in any way rele vant to the goals of this specific type of advocacy program. The analogy is to compare the NAACP with the Black Panthers. Both moderate Jewish advocacy groups with more radical ones. The Ride to Work program is deliberately made to be radical in ways that would be impossible for an already politically engaged organization. Ride to Work will not directly advocate illegal riding activities, but there is a definite edge to some of it’s goals and positions. I think this radicalness will turn out to be a strength, not a weakness. We will not get as stuck in conventional political issues. We seek to empower and educate and give affirmation to those who ride for transportation... and see what happens as a result. Riding to work is a mundane, boring form of everyday radicalness. I do not expect to change the world, but even a small nudge in the motorcycle-as-transportation direction will help everyone.

Andy

From: “Macarthur, Douglas” (via email)
W hat’s your position on helmet laws. Notice I say “laws” I believe this should be a free country, myself. Not arguing a safety issue here. This is a “freedom” issue. See you later, Doug - please respond to helmet issue.

RTW Helmet law position

Ride to Work Inc. does not have any position on helmet laws. We are focused on advocating and supporting the increased use of motorcycles for transportation, and providing information about transportation riding to motorcyclists and to the public. Holding strong subjective views on helmet laws and “freedom” issues is important, but these things should not play a role in a riders decision to use a motorcycle to ride to work. Ride to Work endorsements focus on objective clothing, equipment, eye wear and other gear that can make everyday riding situations safer and more comfortable, so in that sense, we like helmets. But issues involving constitutional questions centered around the existing helmet laws are not related to our aim to expand participation in Ride To Work day... and to encourage motorcycle use as a safe and practical form of surface transportation.

Andy

RIDE TO WORK, INC.

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Recommended Reading from Progress: Surface Transportation Policy Project

Volume X, Number 3: June 2000 Bureau of Transportation

Divorce Your Car: Ending the Love Affair with the Automobile, by Mario Biaggi and Katie Alvorod, 2000, New Society Publishing

Towards Sustainable Communities - Transition and Transportation in Environmental Policy, Daniel Mazmanian and Michael Kraft, eds., 2000 MIT Press


Green Urbanism: Learning from European Cities, Timothy Beatley, 2000 Island Press

Car Free in Cleveland, Alt-Trans Cleveland, 2000 Alt Trans Cleveland Project; EcoCity Cleveland


Designing Sustainable Communities - Learning from Village Homes, Judy and Michael Corbett, 2000 Island Press


Sprawl City - Race, Politics, and Planning in Atlanta, Robert D. Bullard, Glenn S. Johnson, and Angel O. Torres, eds., 2000 Island Press

The Nature of Economics, Jane Jacobs, 2000 Modern Library

The Livable City - Revitalizing Urban Communities, Partners for Livable Communities, 2000 McGraw Hill

Sprawl Busting: State Programs to Guide Communities, Partners for Livable Communities, 2000 McGraw Hill

Roads - Driving America's Great Highways, Larry McMurty, 2000 Simon & Schuster

People are famously irrational in deciding what hazard to pay attention to. More Americans were killed in bicycling accidents last year (about 900) than died in all U.S. airplane crashes in the 1990’s. But when a big plane goes down, there are big stories - which we all read. Residents of Los Angeles or San Francisco are hundreds of times more likely to die in a household fall from a ladder than in an earthquake, yet the earthquake danger is what people are hundreds of times more likely to discuss. (In the 20th century, about 5,000 Americans died in earthquakes, most of them in San Francisco in 1906. That many die in household falls every four months.)

Our reaction to these different perils is both not quite logical and completely understandable, since we are affected by more than the pure statistical risk. The other factors we inevitably weigh include the element of sudden horror - quite high when the earth opens up or you’re trapped in a falling plane; an individual’s ability to control the risk, which is close to zero for an airline passenger; and the ability to correct or recover from the damage after it has occurred, which is very low for airplane crashes.

**Risk Assessment, By James Fallows From The Industry Standard**, March 6, 2000

“A recent study in Tokyo showed that if one in every five car drivers were to ride a bike instead, traffic speed would rise by 35 percent and pollution would be 30 percent down.”

**Performance Bike**, April 2000 issue.

“Cars lie to us and tell us we’re safe, powerful, and in control. The air-conditioning fans murmur empty assurances and whisper, “Sleep, sleep.” Motorcycles tell us a more useful truth: we are small and exposed, and probably moving too fast for our own good, but that’s no reason not to enjoy every minute of the ride.”

**Dave Karlotski, Season of The Bike 7/00**

“...fundamental deficiencies in this methodology are clearly demonstrated by the fact that if the same analysis is applied to all modes of urban transportation, one would reach the absurd conclusion that motorcycles are superior to all other modes of urban passenger transportation. They are cheaper and faster than cars, while their great inferiority in safety and comfort are not considered...”

**Transportation for Livable Cities, Vukan R. Vuchic, 1998**

(This is the single ‘motorcycle’ reference in this ‘authoritative’ 350 page guide for transportation planners. Sheesh.)

Maximum business deduction allowed US employers per employee parking space they provide: $175

Maximum deduction allowed employers for van-pool or mass-transit expenses, per employee: $65

From Harpers Index, July 98

(for motorcycles-$0)

**EVERYDAY RIDES**

Although we’ve received a few responses to ‘Everyday Rides’, we need more... So send ‘em in. (If you don’t we’re gonna start putting pics of MZ’s and diesel Enfields in here...) See issue #1 for additional information about this project.

**ENDORSED!**

Ride to Work Day has been endorsed by the AMA. From the minutes of the October AMA board meeting:

“Ride to Work, Inc. is a new organization devoted to the concept of promoting motorcycling for everyday transportation. The AMA has been approached to endorse “Ride to Work Day,” which is held annually on the third Wednesday in July, and honors those who ride to work on a daily basis... The official endorsement by the AMA and positive publicity in American Motorcyclist will certainly help to heighten awareness among AMA members. A motion was made by Mr. Smilie, seconded by Mr. Blank, and unanimously voted to: Approve and endorse the value of motorcycles as a vehicle for daily personal transportation and designate the third Wednesday in July as ‘Ride to Work Day’ in recognition of that value.”

To join the AMA call 1-800-AMA JOIN.

**DIGEST/CLIPS**

“One thing we know is that the accident rate for motorcyclists has been declining for many years. Riders now are a much safer group than in the ’50s, ’60s, and ’70s. And through the ’80s and ’90s things seemed to improve even more, though the decline in registrations at the same time had to have been a large part of the explanation. Motorcycling has undergone another boom, however, and more people are riding again. Unavoidably, with greater exposure comes more accidents, though the best data we’ve seen recently still indicate that the number of riders is increasing faster than the accident rate, which means that on the whole, motorcyclists are safer than ever. This fact is being ignored. Motorcycle accidents are perceived differently from other traffic incidents; car wrecks are considered regrettable, but a cultural norm; the same result on a motorcyclist would be considered regrettable, but a cultural norm; the same result on a motorcyclist would be considered regrettable, but a cultural norm; the same result on a motorc...”

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